



Lao DECIDE info - A web-based information sharing platform

Adrian Weber, Michael Epprecht (University of Bern, Centre for Development and Environment)

The Lao DECIDE Info is an initiative of the Centre for Development and Environment CDE of the University of Bern, together with the Government of the Lao PDR, which aims to improve access to and integration of key national data and information from a wide range of thematic sectors for development planning and well-informed decisionmaking. Currently there are three different government institutions offering their data on agriculture, socioeconomic development and commercial investment through the Lao DECIDE info.

An important part of Lao DECIDE info is a web platform, online at <http://www.decide.la/>, that hosts easy-to-use tools to access the databases, display, and download data and its metadata as tables or map layers.

The platform's main components are:

- a map viewer to browse, view, and compare detailed ready-made maps
- Statable that provides easy access to the databases and to select variables and areas for download in tabular and spatial form
- an online GIS for advanced queries, spatial overlays and custom map creation

- a metadatabase and interface based on GeoNetwork
- other outputs like analytical reports, Google Earth layers, extensive map repository etc.

The web platform consists mainly of one unified web frontend and one data backend server per data provider. Data backend servers implement a customized interface that leverages on the MapFish protocol where possible. This flexible architecture has the following advantages:

- it leaves the data provider in full control of their datasets; data providers can grant or revoke access to their data independently and anytime
- it allows to add new datasets with a minimal effort (horizontal scalability)
- it allows to add new hardware resources like servers if required (vertical scalability). Meanwhile parts of the web platform have been adapted and implemented in other projects like an information system for the Pamir region in Central Asia (implemented but not yet published) and an information and monitoring system for the Nam Theun 2 hydro power project in Laos (under development).